



Clark County Animal Dealer/Trucker Fined for Illegally Removing Official Identification from Livestock

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MADISON -- A nine month investigation has come to an end with a Clark County man being fined for illegally removing official identification from animals he was transporting and selling, the State Veterinarian's office said today.

In a plea bargain, Timothy J. Heck, N4422 Marg Ave, Neillsville, pleaded no contest to one charge of illegally falsifying, removing, altering and tampering with official identification (ATCP 10.92(4)). He is ordered to pay Clark County Circuit Court \$1,270 plus court costs and fees totaling \$1,458.

"Breeding animals that are bought or sold by an animal dealer must be officially identified to ensure the viability of our livestock industry," said Assistant State Veterinarian Dr. Paul McGraw. "Official identification tags are a key component to our animal disease response efforts. Without identification tags, we are unable to trace back a disease to the herd of origin, which could potentially lead to a larger outbreak of disease if we can't find the origin in a timely manner."

According to the case file, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) was notified in January 2011 that Heck was frequently observed illegally importing cattle from Minnesota and also illegally removing permanent identification in the form of metal ear tags and paper back-tags from bovine cattle and then reselling those animals. At that point, the Department asked Clark County District Attorney Darwin L. Zweig to issue a search warrant. Further investigation revealed that Heck frequently and habitually removed official identification tags and resold animals. The investigation began in January 2011 and concluded in October 2011. During this time, Heck's Animal Dealer/Trucker license renewal was denied.

"Our animal health laws are in place to protect public health, animal health, and our livestock industry," McGraw said. "If an infected cow exposes a barn full of cows, it leads to a variety of costly problems for the buyer up to and including the loss of those cows."

McGraw urges livestock buyers to check for, and examine, animals for official identification before accepting ownership. If there is any question, buyers or their veterinarians can call the State Veterinarian's office at 608-224-4872.

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